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ABSTRACT

To develop a new mission statement for Pima Community College (PCC) in Tucson, Arizona, a "charrette" process was utilized, in which detailed community input was solicited and incorporated as part of the mission statement development. Approximately 100 representatives of the greater Tucson community, together with PCC staff, developed the mission statement for PCC in 1989. After the initial charrette, the same group convened several months later to develop a set of outcomes, or Indicators of Success (IS), directly linked to each of the 12 major areas of the college mission. After this second charrette, PCC's chancellor appointed an Editorial Committee of six representative charrette participants. After 3 meetings, the committee reduced the 56 proposed IS to a final 23. In the ensuing months, an Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), comprised of administrators, faculty, and staff at PCC, prescribed one or more specific measures to assess each of the IS. For each measure, the IEC listed a success criterion, data source, and timeline for collecting data. The resulting specifications table served as the basis for the collection, analysis, and reporting of assessment information. In May 1992, PCC's first annual "report to the community" was conducted, in which assessment results were presented to the original charrette groups. This process became a major support for program improvement at PCC and helped to meet new accreditation reporting requirements. A table of 10 sample mission areas, with their corresponding IS, measures, and assessment results; a review of specific factors contributing to the project's success; implications for research; and references are included. (PAA)

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Paper presented at the 33rd Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research, May 16-19, 1993, Chicago, IL

Abstract

Institutional Research professionals can play a pivotal role in helping a large community college *operationalize* and *measure* community goals and expectations. One hundred community representatives and college staff developed a new mission statement for the College and later identified 23 Indicators of Success, or outcomes, for the mission statement. A charrette process was used for both of these tasks. Both the process and the initial results were highly satisfying to the College community. Conditions supporting the effectiveness of the charrette process, initial assessment results, and implications for institutional reserchers are addressed.

Evaluating the College Mission through Assessing Institutional Outcomes

Introduction and Perspectives

The assessment of Institutional Effectiveness has received increasing attention in recent years. Both two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions have engaged in a myriad of assessment activities ranging from evaluating instructional programs and services to assessing student achievement. These assessment activities often provide information for improving instruction and services to students, as well as meeting the requirements of external accreditation and funding agencies. Recent federal legislation on the Student Right-To-Know and Ability to Benefit has added a major impetus. Ewell (1991) says that accountability through assessment in education is stronger than it ever has been

The literature on Institutional Effectiveness suggests many alternative paths to asssessment. Authors focus on one or more of these dimensions--1) ***what*** should be measured, 2) ***who*** should do the measuring, and 3) ***how*** institutions might go about it. Shirazi (1991) cites over 100 potential measures, none with specific criteria for success. Similarly, Tucker (1992) advises that institutions "measure eveything", and he provides numerous examples of measurable inputs, outcomes, and processes. Ewell (1987) identified four dimensions in which Colleges can measure the outcomes of their instructional mission--knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, and behaviors. DeHart (1992) takes a relational approach, comparing such indicators as degree production in one's institution with peer institutions over time. While the North Central Association (1991) assigns responsibility for devising outcome measures to college faculty, Cowart's 1988 survey of 675 community colleges found that outcomes are most often developed by the institutional research office. By way of counterpoint, MacDougall, Friedkender, Cohen, and Romo (1990) suggest that effectiveness research is best done by a *decentralized* approach. They propose using a campus-wide committee to coordinate and screen

research work done by faculty, staff, and administrators. Alfred and Kreidler (1991) urge demonstrated value-addedness for students and customers with documented outcomes of teaching and learning. They cite several community colleges which have linked the organizational mission statements with goals and students outcomes. Doucette and Hughes (1990) and Ewell (1990) recommend considering the clients served by the mission and what they tend to expect. Ewell (1990) also advocates making a visible commitment to improvement accross a wide range of "seemingly unconnected areas--from advisement to parking" (p. 14). This supports his notion of higher education as a strategic public investment in which colleges need to document "a concrete return on investment" (Ewell, 1991, p. 14).

The approach taken by Pima Community College (PCC) emulates the recommendations of Doucette and Hughes (1990) and Ewell (1990). PCC, a multicampus college of 30,000 students in Tucson, Arizona, sought community expectations regarding outcomes to evaluate the degree to which it is fulfilling its mission. This paper discusses the methods used to identify and operationalize outcomes, as well as the initial assessment results.

Methodology

Following the appointment of a new chancellor in 1989, approximately 100 representatives of the Greater Tucson community and Pima Community College used a *charrette process* (Shepak, Ortiz-Fiero, and Coe, 1988) to develop a new mission statement for the College. A Charrette (French for *little cart*) is a compact, fast-track planning process which uses community members to envision the future of an organization. Architects and planners in modern times have adapted the process used by arcnitecture students at the medieval University of Paris, who gradually improved their drawings or models as a result of community input as they rode carts to the University.

After the initial charrette, which produced a highly regarded mission statement, the same group convened several months later to develop a set of outcomes, called Indicators of Success, which were directly linked to the 12 major areas addressed by the College Mission.

In the second charrette, participants were grouped at tables--each table was responsible for one of the twelve functions or facets in the mission statement, e.g., creative/effective teaching, access and equitable opportunity. Each group was charged with developing one or two "Indicators of Success" for their assigned mission topic. After one hour of work, the groups presented their draft indicators to a "jury" of five persons selected from the charrette participants. After a critique from the jury and the committee-of-the-whole, participants retreated again to their tables for further refinement or, in some cases, a fresh start. After several refinements, the groups turned their final products over to the Chancellor, who had led the charrette.

But the work was far from over. The Chancellor, in turn, appointed an editorial committee of six representative charrette participants, who met to trim the set of 56 proposed Indicators to a more focused set of 12-20. It took three meetings to reduce the set of Indicators to a final 23 and to agree on consistency in wording.

In the ensuing four months, a second committee of College administrators, faculty and staff, including the Institutional Research Director, prescribed specific measures to assess each of the Indicators of Success. The intent of this process was to provide information that could be used to: (1) improve program and services to students, (2) annually report the College's progress in fulfilling its mission to the community, and (3) support other College initiatives, such as Program Review.

One or more specific measures were developed to assess each of the outcomes specified by the community in the Indicators of Success. For each measure, this Institutional Effectiveness Committee listed a success criterion, data source, and a timeline for collecting assessment data.

This specifications table served as the basis for the collection, analysis, and reporting of assessment information.

The measures used to assess the Indicators of Success drew upon existing measures, commercially developed measures, and additional College developed measures. Examples of several Mission areas and their corresponding Indicators of Success and assessment measures are listed in Table 1.

For existing measures, data were collected, analyzed, and summarized. In other cases, plans were made to develop data collection procedures and instruments. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were categorized and summarized.

Results

Initial assessment results were presented to the original charrette groups of community and College representatives in May 1992. This "report to the community", which will be conducted annually, serves as a way for community members to evaluate how well their tax dollars are being spent. Assessment results are also being distributed within the College to support various College initiatives, as appropriate. Examples of these results are listed in Table 2.

In retrospect, the double-charrette process to re-create the mission of the College and to establish community expectations about mission results was enormously successful. The process reflected Keller's (1987) view that the "business of the college is in reality whatever the community says it is" (p. 76). It established a firm basis for accountability to the taxpayers and to the community-at-large. It became a major support for program improvement and helped to meet new accreditation reporting requirements on Institutional Effectiveness.

Table 1.

Indicators of Success and Assessment Measures for Selected Mission Areas

Mission Area	Indicator of Success	Assessment Measure
Creative and effective teaching	Students will rate faculty good or excellent on evaluation items dealing with instruction.	Student ratings of instruction
General education	Employers will rate graduates' on-the-job performance in critical thinking, communication, reading, and computing as adequate or better.	Employer ratings of graduates
Occupational programs	Completers will demonstrate competency on certification exams.	Percent passing certification or licensing exams
Transfer education	Academic achievement of students transferring to 4-year institutions will equal that of native students.	Grade point averages (GPAs) of transfer students compared to native students
Employees and work environment	Employees will show a greater understanding of the College mission, communications, decision-making and EEO/AA procedures.	Ratings on Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) survey
Access and equitable opportunity	Increase services enhancing multicultural and multiethnic sensitivity.	Document number and types of services provided compared to previous years

Table 2.

Assessment Results of Selected Mission Success Indicators

Mission Area - Indicator of Success	Specific Measure	Assessment Results
Creative and Effective teaching - Students will rate faculty good or excellent on evaluation items dealing with instruction.	Student Evaluation of Instruction Questionnaire	District-wide, students rated faculty 5.46 (outstanding) on a 6-point scale.
Occupational programs - Completers will demonstrate competency on certification exams.	Data from certificate/ licensing agencies on PCC completers in programs with practitioner certification/ licensing requirements	Percent of completers passing certification exams: Real Estate (75%), Licensed Practical Nurse (73% over 5 years), Registered Nurse (91% over 5 years).
Transfer education - Academic achievement of PCC students transferring to 4-year institutions will equal that of native students.	Transfer data supplied by the 4-year institution to which PCC students primarily transfer	Lower division transfer students from the Community College have somewhat lower 5-year graduation and persistence rates than do native freshmen from the local university.
Employees and work environment - Employees will show a greater understanding of PCC mission, communications, decision-making and EEO/AA procedures.	Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) survey	College employees rated the communication of the College Mission a 3.87 (satisfied) on a 5-point scale.

What made the process so effective? Beyond the prerequisites of strong leadership and attention to hundreds of details, the following conditions were important:

- *Preparation.* The preparatory research and call for papers provided a strong information base for the participants and ensured that many voices contributed to the final product. Consequently, the mission statement and the indicators enjoyed widespread ownership.
- *A balance between control and letting go.* While certain control mechanisms were in place (e.g., group topics assigned, participants selected on certain criteria, a common information packet, the jury, and committee-of-the-whole), charrette leaders invested a high level of trust that the participants would produce a quality, responsive product.
- *The Editorial Committee*, comprised of a key cross-section of participants, helped winnow the proposed 56 indicators down to a more workable 23. This six-person committee helped preserve integrity, yet expedited the process.
- *Quick turnaround.* Once in motion, the charrettes moved to a quick resolution and provided participants with a prompt sense of closure.
- *Celebration of Achievement.* The closing luncheon and awards, the newspaper ad, and the Report to the Community luncheon not only engendered a sense of closure, they permitted an opportunity to celebrate the College and its accomplishments.

Two years after its re-creation, College employees and members of the community are *still celebrating* the mission statement and Indicators of Success--by displaying them, by quoting from them in meetings large and small, and by measuring their performance against the stated ideals.

Implications for Institutional Researchers

There are numerous implications for institutional researchers resulting from this project. Some of these include:

1. Assessing the degree to which the community college is attaining its stated mission is an important task (Doucette and Hughes, 1990; Ewell, 1990). Involvement of the community strengthens public accountability.

2. It is important that the institutional researcher be involved in the project from the beginning to assure that assessment measures are both useful and practical. This involvement will help insure that additional data can be collected at existing "points of contact" with students and other "consumers," as suggested by Ewell (1990).

3. The end users of the information need to be partners with research staff in operationalizing the outcome measures so that they will experience ownership of the data, as well as be able to use the information. When the end users are community members, this step helps reduce the possibility that the selected measures will alienate the public, which sometimes results when outcomes are used that do not reflect community expectations (Palmer, 1993).

4. When possible, it is important to assure that: (a) existing measures are used, b) measures are used for multiple purposes, and (c) measures are not duplicated. This implication will grow in importance as the demands for greater accountability and assessment increase.

5. It was demonstrated that it *is* possible for institutional research professionals and program staff to operationalize and measure community expectations with a high level of mutual satisfaction.

In conculsion, the charrette process discussed in this paper proved to be an effective tool in developing the College Mission and measures to assess it.

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